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ANNEX 1991

THE COMMUNIST ORGANIZATION AND CAPABILITIES
FOR DOMESTIC SUBVERSION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

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ANNEX III

THE COMMUNIST ORGANIZATION AND CAPABILITY FOR POLITICAL SUBVERSION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

I. Communist Concepts of Political Subversion

Certain basic principles long stressed by the Vietnamese Communists bear importantly on their efforts at political subversion. Of primary importance is the integration of both military and political forces into an interlocking whole in the conduct of subversion. As their documents put it, the insurgency is a "three-sided attack," comprising "armed struggle, political struggle, and military proselytizing." Each participant is expected to "fight both politically and militarily."

The Communists also believe it is necessary to develop and coordinate the insurgency concurrently in the cities and in the rural areas. In general, they seek to secure the rural areas around the cities, towns and strategic installations hamlet by hamlet as a launch point for a final effort in the cities. The Communists hope that a balance of forces will be achieved between government and insurgent military strength which will guarantee the success of the "general uprising" of both the urban and rural populace which the Communists expect will eventually occur. Within the cities, meanwhile, the Communists seek to undermine government strength and purpose, to gain control over the "masses" through subversion and terrorism, and to build in the cities the political and military forces which will assist the "general uprising" and lead to collapse of the government.

II. The Apparatus For Subversion

The apparatus which the Vietnamese Communists are using for political subversion in South Vietnam comprises several major elements: (a) the Communist Party; that is, the southern segment of the North Vietnamese Lao Dong Party, which for tactical purposes maintains a fictional separate identity as the People's Revolutionary Party of South Vietnam; (b) the party's youth auxiliary, the People's Revolutionary Youth Group; and (c) the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam and its associated web of regional,

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functional, and social "Liberation Associations," all covertly controlled by party cadres.

There is also an underground of covert agents and sympathizers utilized by the party to gather information, to help in political agitation, and to procure supplies. Over the years the party has developed extensive and elaborate communications (courier and radio), intelligence nets, and internal security and propaganda systems. These serve to reinforce the cohesion, direction, and unity of effort of the movement throughout South Vietnam, in its political as well as in its military actions.*

A. Party Organization and Role

The Communist Party provides the organizational core for the subversive apparatus.** A special department of the

*The Communist subversive apparatus has been built around several thousand members of Ho Chi Minh's Viet Minh who stayed behind in the South after the division of Vietnam in 1954 to work for a Communist take-over and reunification. They have been reinforced over the years from among the estimated 90,000 members of the Viet Minh movement who went north in 1954. Many of these have returned to the South as needed in political as well as military roles. Many of the original members of this group have spent nearly all their adult years involved in or committed in one way or another to their "struggle," which began in the fight to oust the French.

Their strength in part flows from their dedication, indoctrination, tight organization, discipline, and singleness of purpose.

**Until late 1961, the Communists in South Vietnam made no effort to portray themselves as distinct from Ho Chi Minh's Lao Dong Party. However, to give the revolution a nucleus which would be more southern in identity and orientation, Hanoi directed in late 1961 that the southern Communists assume the mantle of an ostensibly independent party--the People's Revolutionary Party. This party was proclaimed openly in January 1962, and described by implication as the spiritual heir of the Indochinese Communist Party and the "vanguard" for the Liberation Front.

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party in Hanoi concerns itself with the problems of the struggle in the South and with the southern party segment.* It acts by and large through the party's Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN) located in a base area (Zone C) in Tay Ninh Province. COSVN functions in many respects as a headquarters for the People's Revolutionary Party, controlling through covert party channels the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (NFLSV) and acting through party channels as the high command of the Viet Cong forces --the Liberation Army.** (See Figure III-1)

COSVN sends directives down through a traditional pyramidal party structure--a series of regional, provincial, and lower-echelon party committees, each a microcosm of the COSVN organization. The party committees of the provinces (not always identical with government provinces) appear to be the lowest echelon permitted any significant latitude in adjusting policy to local conditions.

The village party committees, and the village or hamlet party chapters and cells they control, provide the essential grass roots. The local party chapters and their component three-man cells provide the party members who lead the local guerrilla units, control the local Liberation

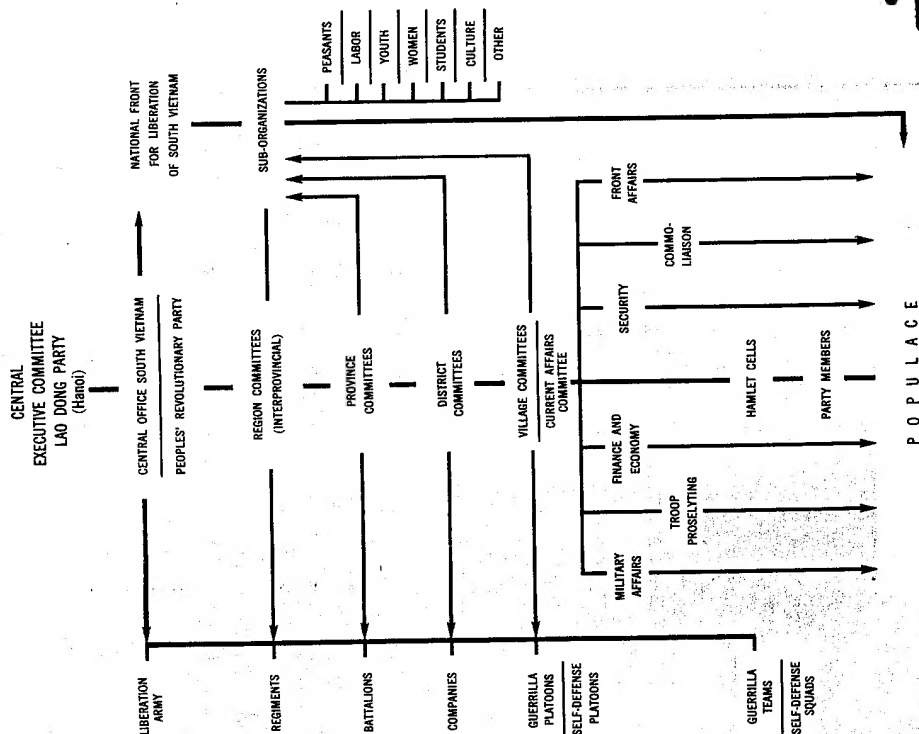
*One overt indication of Hanoi's directing role in the insurgency is the fact that the head of this party department is a major general, a vice chief of staff in the North Vietnamese Army. He also heads the government's department in charge of "reunification" affairs.

**COSVN is elaborately organized on the traditional Communist pattern. A small Current Affairs Committee--a standing committee of the principal functionaries--provides continuing direction of all political and military actions and organs. Subsections and departments under COSVN execute policies and provide a central bureaucracy. In directing the Viet Cong military forces, COSVN functions through a Military affairs Committee, though some major Communist unit headquarters also have direct contacts with Hanoi. The relationship between COSVN political and military channels and between COSVN and Hanoi is not entirely clear. All evidence, however, points to a harmonious command system which appears to give the Communists adequate capability and flexibility for action in South Vietnam.

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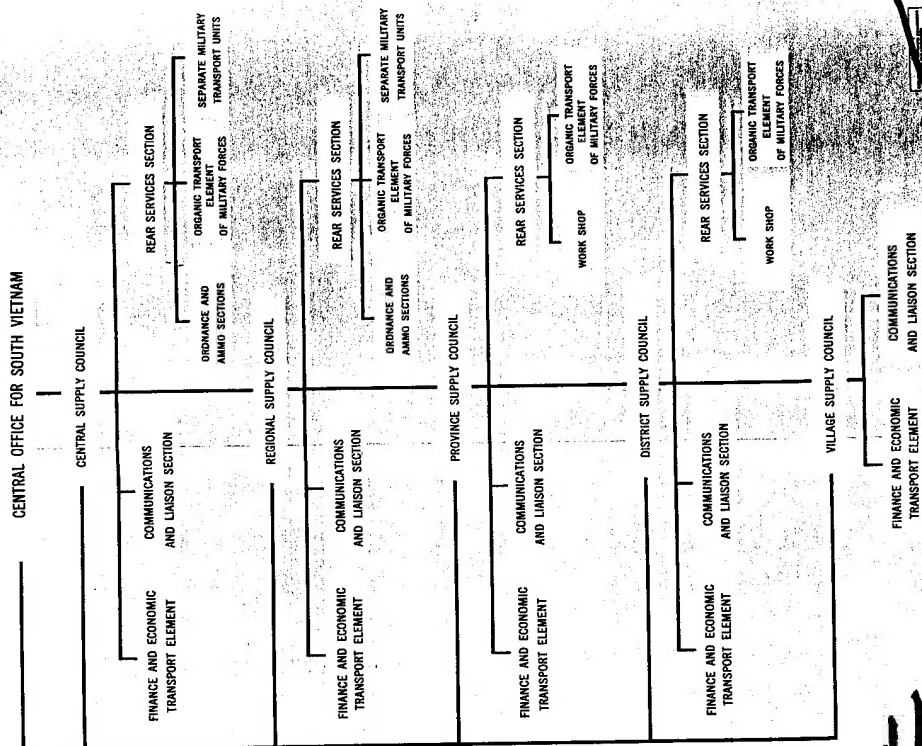
COMMUNIST COMMAND STRUCTURE IN SOUTH VIETNAM



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Figure III-1

ORGANIZATION OF THE VIET CONG LOGISTICS SYSTEM



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Front associations, and recruit for the party, the Front or the guerrilla unit.*

If the party has established a local village or hamlet government (a village "Liberation Committee" or a hamlet "Administrative Committee" or "Board"), the party ensures adherence to its directives by planting its members in key positions or by ensuring that the local party secretary monitors village activities. In government-controlled areas and in the cities, it is the party member operating covertly who recruits and agitates and who enlists or buys agents or sympathizers.

In practice, this system has served the Communists well, giving them adequate control and flexibility. It has doubtless been strained, but certainly not critically, by the increasing demands put upon the party cadre as a result of the faster pace of the war. These strains, however, are probably already severe enough to inhibit somewhat the party's capability for expanding and consolidating control over insurgent assets in the rural area.

Within the Viet Cong armed units--regular and irregular--party members occupy most if not all key command and staff posts. Political officers are assigned to every unit. Party chapters and cells within the units seek to develop and maintain political consciousness and steadfastness within the ranks. Documents indicate that party members generally make up about one third the strength of regular units.** Party strength in the ranks of the irregular units appears to be considerably less than in the regular units.

*Acting as much as possible through the Front party cadre disseminate propaganda, round up local labor for Viet Cong military units operating in the area, and collect taxes and information--or monitor or control those who do. If the village or hamlet is under firm Viet Cong control, this may be done more or less overtly in the name of the party. If it is not, there may be only a few party members who must attempt all this on a covert basis.

**One document, describing the activities of the party chapters within a military unit formed in October 1965 to handle the processing and training of recruits en route

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Parallel to the party at all echelons, serving as a reservoir of new members, is the party's youth auxiliary, the People's Revolutionary Youth Group, nominally made up of young men and women 16 to 25. In practice, particularly where the number of local party members is small, Youth Group members perform many of the functions of regular party members.

B. Party Numerical Strength

It is possible to make only a rough estimate of current party numerical strength in South Vietnam since the evidence on the subject, mainly in the form of captured Communist membership lists, is extremely fragmentary. No data of significance, for example, are available for the Mekong delta, long a Communist stronghold, where party membership presumably would be high. The problem is further complicated by the covert nature of party membership, even in some Viet Cong - controlled areas, and by the party's failure--which is attested in captured documents--to develop its organization and strength uniformly in all areas.

Fortunately, a firm figure for party membership in the South at the end of 1961 is available to use as a base for current estimates. It comes from a Communist document produced early in 1963 which stated that the party numbered 35,000 members in the South at the end of 1961. This included members in the Viet Cong armed forces. Since this document contained much other accurate information, it is probable that the membership figure is reliable.

Taking this figure as a foundation, we estimate on the basis of evidence contained in captured documents and

from the delta areas to central Vietnam, provides an illustration of the party make-up of a unit at the main force level. Out of a strength of 490, 202 were party members in 18 party chapters: 168 were Youth Group members. Of 95 men in seven of the 18 party chapters, three were members who had stayed behind in 1954, 41 had been admitted subsequently in the South, 51 were returnees from North Vietnam. No ethnic northerners were indicated, but this would not be unusual for a unit functioning in the southern part of South Vietnam. The proportion of party and Youth Group members is higher than that in a number of other units where figures are available; the higher the main force echelon, however, the greater the party membership.

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prisoner interrogation reports that party membership in the South had approximately doubled by mid-1965 and that it stood at around 75,000. The documents and prisoner interrogations suggest that about 25,000 of the party members operated primarily as members of the insurgent armed forces, the bulk of them in the regular main force units.* The remainder, some 50,000, seem to have been mainly concerned with political action, including subversive operations.**

*See footnote ** on Page III-4. Although party members may make up as much as a third of main force strength, their numbers appear from the documents to decline drastically in the irregular units. As a general rule, the lower the echelon, the fewer the party members. A 1965 document captured in Phu Yen Province, for example, indicated that the percentage of party members in the "village guerrillas" in one district was 13%. The percentage among the "hamlet guerrillas" was 3%. On the basis of such information, we believe that party strength in the irregular forces averages less than one party member for every ten guerrillas.

In mid-1965, main force strength was estimated at approximately 55,000. If one third of these were party members, they would number about 18,000. The balance of the 25,000 estimated party members in the military, we believe, were in the irregular units. The total number of party members in the armed forces could be raised somewhat if, in fact, US estimates of irregular strength of the Communist forces are too low. If irregular strength were, for example, around 200,000, it would probably mean that there are an additional 10,000 party members in the South.

**As examples of the material from which this figure was developed, several documents which provide some fairly precise data on party strengths as of mid-1965 in Hoai Nhon District of Binh Dinh Province, and in Cu Chi District of Hau Nghia Province may be cited. Both districts can be regarded as Communist strongholds, the latter of many years standing. The documents indicate that there were approximately 590 party members in Hoai Nhon in mid-1965 working at the village or hamlet level. This was approximately one third of one percent of the population estimated by MACV at that time to be under VC control in the District. In Cu Chi District, there were approximately 900 party members of the same category as in Hoai Nhon in mid-1965. This
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Captured documents indicate that even before the effects of the US military buildup were felt, party leaders were not satisfied with the party's numerical strength. Since mid-1965 they have put heavy pressure on lower echelons to recruit new members in all areas.* If the quotas reflected in many captured documents were applied on a national basis, they could theoretically mean a party membership goal of some 100,000 at the end of 1965, exclusive of party members in Viet Cong regular military units.

was approximately one percent of the population estimated at the time to be under VC control in Cu Chi. If these two cases are averaged out, a figure of about seven-tenths of one percent is obtained. This fits in fairly well with the average of the other samples of party membership available. Seven tenths of one percent of the population believed under VC control in mid-1965 would be about 25,000 party members. To this must be added the party members working throughout the country at echelons above the village level, including district, province, and COSVN cadre. The documents suggest that there are approximately 25,000 such cadre (This is the approximate figure also used by MACV). It would thus appear that there were approximately 50,000 party members working mainly at political tasks in the South in mid-1965.

*One updated document of 1965 specified the quotas to be met during the year by a coastal district in Binh Dinh Province. It called for one member per 100 people in "liberated" areas, one per 150 in "disputed" areas, and one per 250 in government areas. The recruiting of women was to be stressed, to provide 20 to 30 percent of the total. Presumably this document reflected recruitment quotas handed down by the Province Party Committee and would not include the party membership in regular military units.

There are indications that in the last half of 1965, party leaders made a particular effort to speed recruitment in the cities. They directed that party members be sent from the rural areas to the cities to assist in recruiting and other tasks. One analysis indicates that the despatch of 500 to 1,000 party members to Saigon may have been contemplated. Another document from Binh Dinh Province notes a requirement to send about 5% of the party members of one rural district to the district town and to the province capital, for "activities there."

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There is insufficient evidence to judge how the recruiting drive has gone. It is highly doubtful, however, that the sort of recruiting goals indicated above have been met, particularly in those rural areas where US military power is felt most. Recent documents include numerous reports of a slow pace in party development. Moreover, party doctrine calls for considerable caution in admitting members; they must be tested, checked, and investigated.

We believe that party membership in the South as of mid-1966 probably still totals no more than 100,000, including both political cadre and those in the armed forces. This would grant an increase of approximately one-third in about one year, which seems quite generous. It is interesting to compare the estimated numerical strength of the party in the South with that of the Communists in North Vietnam. In April of 1966, Ho Chi Minh declared that "presently, in the North, our party has more than 760,000 members." This is approximately double the numerical strength announced by Hanoi in 1960. It is also approximately 6% of the total estimated population of the DRV. Using a figure of 100,000 for party strength in the South at present would mean that roughly 4-6% of the population estimated under Viet Cong control are party members.

C. Numerical Strength of the Party Youth Group

Estimating the numerical strength of the party's youth group is even more difficult than that of the regular party itself. Analysis of the few captured documents bearing on the question, however, indicated rather surprisingly that the party youth in the South are fewer in number than full party members. It appears that the party youth group may be around three-fourths the size of the regular party. On this basis, youth group strength in mid-1965 might have been around 55,000 with about 15,000 to 20,000 of these in regular military and support units. Recruitment to expand the youth group was also stressed in 1965, with indications that in some areas it was to be doubled if possible.

We believe this estimate must be treated cautiously until more evidence is available, since the apparent numerical strength of the Communist youth in South Vietnam stands in sharp contrast with the situation in most Communist-controlled countries. In North Vietnam, for example, there are approximately five party youth for every full-time

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party member. The reasons for the seeming scarcity of party youth in South Vietnam are not readily apparent, although we believe they are probably related primarily to the difficult conditions under which the Communists must operate. They may find it hard to encourage the growth of the party youth apparatus given the covert nature of many party operations and the need to engage available youth in military activities as rapidly as possible.*

D. Numerical and Other Limitations on Party Effectiveness

There is no evidence as yet of any weakening in the resolve of the leading political cadres to continue pressing the "struggle." There are indications, however, of limitations on the total capability of the party for effecting further subversion. (Some of these--relating to morale--are discussed at greater length in ANNEX VII of this study.)

The party is stretched thin. The effort to expand testifies to this, as well as to the increasing demands placed upon it both to enable Viet Cong military expansion and to replace casualties. The running of a de facto government in some regions, and particularly the administration of the economy of areas which must provide ever-growing support for a large army, increasingly involves the party cadres in essentially logistic, bureaucratic, and administrative tasks. Local party organs are increasingly being called on to send party and Youth Group members along with the contingents of local guerrillas or conscripts destined for main force units. Party administrative staffs are pared down; documents indicate that even principal sections of the COSVN headquarters have been affected.

*The age brackets for party youth in South Vietnam are not entirely clear. It appears, however, that youth from the ages of about 16 to 25 are eligible. In North Vietnam, the age of the party youth was recently raised from 27 to 30 years to enable the regime to facilitate the handling of party-associated individuals in the military. It would thus appear that the buildup of armed forces in the North has disrupted the normal procedures for party youth; the same situation in the South may have a bearing on the apparent smallness of the youth apparatus there.

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There are complaints in the documents about the ineptitude and inexperience of the party cadres in several areas. Undoubtedly this reflects the need to reach further down into party ranks and into affiliated organizations for local leading cadres. Party members serving primarily in political capacities are suffering casualties as a result of combat in their areas, the documents report. Moreover, there have been various directives calling for a considerable proportion of the party membership in various rural areas to join the local guerrillas. Presumably this diverts them from political tasks.

These difficulties have probably not yet developed into critical handicaps. But they are factors to which the party leaders must devote increasing attention. The situation has almost certainly placed a limit on the ultimate responsiveness and capability of the party apparatus to react to Communist needs in South Vietnam. At the present time, it is probable that any significant intensification of demands on the party political structure cannot be met as adequately as in the past.

E. The National Liberation Front

Under instructions from Hanoi, the Communists in the South put together the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (NFLSV) at the end of 1960, a year before they announced, again under instructions from Hanoi, the formation of the People's Revolutionary Party.* The NFLSV was to serve as a facade for Communist political and military operations, as a lodestone to attract and organize mass support for the insurgency, and as an infrastructure for the political and economic administration of "liberated" areas (See ANNEX XII for a discussion of the political posture of the Front).

*The Communists claim they are only one element in the Front, albeit the "vanguard" element. However, through the selection and manipulation of the membership of the executive committees making up the NFLSV and running its ancillary regional and functional "Liberation Front" associations, the party controls the Front in classic, covert Communist fashion. The headquarters of the central committee of the Front is known to be co-located with COSVN.

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On paper at least, the Front structure parallels the party structure down to the hamlet level, through a laddering of committees at every administrative echelon, each of which is dominated by its Communist members. Aligned with the Front are a number of functional "liberation" associations aimed at almost every aspect of life in South Vietnam. The most significant of these are the liberation associations for farmers, for youths, and for women.

While there was apparently some initial enthusiasm for the NFLSV, flowing from memories of the Viet Minh struggle against the French and from local grievances against the Diem government, there is no body of evidence indicating significant popular support of the Front in the areas where government control is relatively effective. In the "liberated" rural areas, however, the evidence indicates that many Front associations are operating entities at the local level.* The importance of the "liberated associations" to the Viet Cong in the rural areas is given considerable stress in captured documents.

It is doubtful that enrollment in one of the Front associations represents in many cases a willing individual commitment to the Viet Cong cause--except, probably, for those recruited covertly in government-held or nearby "disputed" areas. Nonetheless, once enrollment is obtained, it is the Communist intention to get such commitment. In "newly liberated" areas, the Communists see the organization of Front associations as a major step in the consolidation of their control, a wedge further separating the people from the government. This appears to be one of the primary tasks for party cadres in organizing a village or a hamlet after government officials or troops have left.

*They serve as instruments through which to garner logistic support and recruits for the insurgent armed forces. They are also useful for the political indoctrination of the populace, for the recruitment of demonstrators or troop proselytors, and for the reshaping of the economic and social patterns of the country as far as the Communists feel it is wise to go at this time. Above all, they are intended to engage and commit the populace in the over-all effort to undermine and destroy the government.

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On up the line, the NFLSV apparatus does not appear to be wholly in operation even though Front Committees exist theoretically at every echelon. Instructions on policies affecting Front elements or the component liberation associations appear to pass through party channels. Since the party is the basic control mechanism, the absence of fully operating front committees at higher levels probably has no particular influence on over-all insurgent political capabilities.

F. Numerical Strength of the Front

The problems that are encountered in measuring the numerical strength of the Communist party in the South also complicate attempts to assess the numerical size of the NFLSV. In the case of the Front, there is the added problem of defining what constitutes Front "membership." Presumably, some Front members carry something like a membership card, and others should probably be regarded as members primarily because they at least occasionally participate in the activities of some Front association.

The only hard evidence available on the numerical strength of the Front is contained in a few captured Communist documents that list the number of "members" of various Front associations and organs in a few scattered areas outside the delta. We believe that the individuals listed in the documents include both the full, card-carrying NFLSV members, and those whom the Communists consider enrolled in the Front organs even though their participation may be passive and they may not be fully committed to NFLSV or insurgent objectives. Occasionally some of those in the latter category may participate in Front-sponsored activities.

As in the case of the Communist party, we have available a figure for Front strength in an earlier period which is probably reliable. In this instance, a captured document put the strength of the NFLSV in early 1963 at around 60,000.* By mid-1965, our extrapolations from the

*The Communists viewed the numerical strength of the Front at the time as inadequate. One document of the period admitted that "we still have a lot of weaknesses in organizing the masses, even though the Liberation bodies exert lots of effect on them."

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captured documents listing Front membership indicate that the strength of the NFLSV had grown substantially. It appears that in mid-1965, the Communists probably counted around 500,000 male and female South Vietnamese (presumably over 16) as being enrolled in one or another of the Liberation Associations.* Probably over 80 percent of these were residents of rural areas where the Viet Cong were in firm control or where the government presence was very shaky.

Estimates at the time placed the total rural population in Viet Cong hands at around 4 million. With acceptance of these estimates and of the standard estimate that about 65 percent of the Vietnamese population consists of persons above age 16, it would appear that the Communists had enrolled about 15 percent or so of the adults under their control in the Front or its affiliated organizations.

A number of documents of the period indicate that the Communists were exhorting their cadres to greater efforts in recruiting Front members in 1965 and were highly critical of the cadres for their failure to use these mass organizations properly "in order to lead the population."**

*The following are several examples of regional enrollment available from the documents: In June 1965, the party committee of one coastal district of Binh Dinh Province claimed over 21,000 liberation association members including farmers, youth, and women. This is over 12 percent of the then estimated population of the district. At the time, the district was reported to be largely under Viet Cong control or influence, except for the district town and its environs. The Liberation Women's Association in the Viet Cong province roughly equating to Quang Nam apparently claimed over 17,000 members in mid-1965. This could amount to over 10 percent of the female population in areas under Viet Cong control. The Liberation Farmers' Association in Tay Ninh Province claimed over 6,000 members in 1965. This would be about 4 percent of the total estimated population not under firm government control in mid-1965 or about 23 percent of the population estimated as being under Viet Cong control. By the end of the year, the Association reported 783 new members, an increase of over 11 percent.

**One document complained that "in many places the movement has not been organized yet; some places just have a few cells or core cadres." Cadres in an area comprising
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Although hard evidence of the actual growth in Front membership during the last 12 months is still sorely lacking, it is highly doubtful that the Communists came anywhere near meeting their recruitment goals, particularly in areas of considerable military activity where there have been indications of growing reluctance on the part of the local populace to provide labor and other support for the Viet Cong. We think it probable, in view of the difficulties the Communists have encountered in enlisting popular support recently, and taking into consideration the past growth rate of the NFLSV, that its strength is still no higher than 700,000 to 750,000 at the present time.

III. Numerical Strength of the Communist Political Apparatus in Urban Areas

A. General Position

In the towns and cities, the Communists must operate covertly. The main targets for recruitment both into the covert ranks of the party and its youth group and into the underground of sympathizers are the lower military and civil ranks of the government, the disgruntled, the poor, the unemployed, manual laborers, students, and intellectuals. Documents suggest that the Communists expect few recruits from the practicing members of certain religious and political factions--the "reactionary" Catholics, the Cao Dai, the Hoa Hao, and the "reactionaries" among the Buddhists.

Fragmentary documentary evidence is available on the extent of the underground in the cities. Analysis of this limited amount of material suggests that while the underground is pervasive, it still falls far short of Communist hopes--partly in terms of the calibre of those recruited.

the bulk of the seven provinces immediately north of Saigon were exhorted to recruit until their Liberation Associations included by the end of last year 65-85 percent (presumably of the population over 16) in liberated villages and hamlets, 35-50 percent in newly liberated villages and hamlets, and 3-10 percent in rural areas "near cities, towns and important installations." While recruiting was not to be indiscriminate--new members were to have a "good class background" and a good "struggle attitude"--the target set was 100,000 new members in the area.

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Available evidence also indicates that the party has long regarded its over-all political apparatus as weak in the urban areas, and that it has steadily exhorted its cadre to greater recruiting efforts.* The added recruiting efforts have partially involved the dispatch of party members and agents from the rural areas to the cities for proselytizing activities.**

B. Numerical Strength in Saigon and Environs

In the Viet Cong's Saigon - Cholon - Gia Dinh Special Zone which comprises the Saigon metropolitan area and its surrounding rural sectors, it appears from the documentary evidence that by mid-1965 some 24,000 people were controlled or primarily influenced by the Communists.*** This would have meant that slightly under one percent of the total population of the Saigon metropolitan area was committed in one extent or another to the insurgent cause.

*In February 1966, a captured summation of a high-level logistics conference held by COSVN revealed that the Viet Cong considered the element of their apparatus which served to procure supplies in the markets of the government-held cities inadequate. According to the summation, this operation must increase "threefold" during 1966 to meet "requirements in 1967 during the rainy season." The conference reported that "we have almost no cadre operating in the cities; the purchase of goods is mostly done through intermediaries," and it recommended strenuous recruiting efforts.

**Full analysis of the success of this effort must await further evidence, but there is already fragmentary material suggesting that it has been at least partially successful. For example, the party committee for the capital of Binh Duong Province, which borders the heavily populated Saigon - Cholon - Gia Dinh Special Zone to the north, reported at the end of 1965 that it had succeeded during the year in planting in the urban areas 99 new agents who had turned in 150 intelligence reports.

***A document of mid-1965, for example, consisted of a chart compiling the party's personnel assets in this zone, which covers an area of at least 2.5 million inhabitants. Since a marginal notation by the Communist compiler states that "several cadres have not yet reported," it cannot be considered a complete accounting. Nonetheless, it
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Approximately 6,000 of these supporters were party and party youth, many of them in the Viet Cong armed forces in the rural area of the Zone. In addition to party personnel, the insurgents counted nearly 16,000 members of the Front in the Zone in early 1965.* Almost all of these individuals resided in the rural districts adjacent to Saigon.

may have included most of the regularly available political assets controlled by the Party committee of the Zone; it probably did not include a far smaller number reporting directly to COSVN or to Hanoi, nor does it appear to have included the very low level agents or informants used for the gathering of intelligence. As "internal" assets (presumably those living and working, either "legally" or "illegally," in the metropolitan areas) the chart lists:

Party Members -----	305
Youth Group -----	133
"Backbone Agents" -----	238
Sympathizers -----	1,416
"Active Agents" -----	48
Liberation Association -----	343
Liaison Agents -----	22
Total	2,505

Analysis of the total document suggests that of the 1,416 "sympathizers," 368 were involved in preparing or disseminating propaganda, 600 were students or teachers, 125 were government employees or were looked to for proselyting among government employees.

In addition to the party and youth members presumably operating in the Saigon metropolitan area, the document suggests that in the more rural areas of the Zone at least an additional 3,300 party and 2,300 Youth Group members were active. Of those operating in the rural areas, however, almost 2,000 were subordinate to the Military Affairs Committee of the Zone, and most of these probably were assigned to the regular military units operating in the Zone as the party's armed terrorist and "armed propaganda" muscle.

*These were broken down into nearly 9,000 liberation farmers, about 1,500 liberation youth, and about 5,500 liberation women.

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The evidence is not adequate to make a numerical estimate of Viet Cong assets in the other major cities of South Vietnam. The impression conveyed by the fragmentary material, however, is that the insurgent political strength in the other cities is no stronger proportionally than in the Saigon area and its environs, except possibly in Hue.*

Available evidence clearly indicates that the party has long regarded its over-all political apparatus as weak in the urban areas.

IV. Strength of the Political Apparatus in Rural Areas:
A Sample

Several captured documents of the party's district committee in Hoai Nhon, the northern coastal district of Binh Dinh Province, provide some idea of the numerical strength of the insurgent political apparatus which might have been found in a largely Viet Cong area outside the delta in mid-1965. In January 1965, this district had a population of about 170,000. Except for the immediate area of the district town, it was in Viet Cong hands. Prior to 1954, the area had been a Viet Minh stronghold. It is a largely Buddhist region, with a Catholic minority and a history of Catholic-Buddhist friction. As of mid-1965, there were 100,000 refugees in Binh Dinh, 40,000 of them Catholic.

In mid-June 1965, the District Committee reported that exclusive of any troops and cadres responsive to higher headquarters, there were slightly over 20,000 party and

*Although no numerical figures on political assets in Hue have been turned up, the success of the Communists in infiltrating and influencing the "struggle movement" there in April and May suggests that the Communists may have obtained a better foothold in this area than in other urban regions. There are indications, for example, that a substantial element of Communist sympathizers exists among the student body at Hue University where a variety of influences, many of them extremist in nature, operate on the students. A number of prominent politicians and teachers in Hue have been active in antigovernment, antimilitary movements in the past two years.

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NFLSV members in the district.* This was nearly 13 percent of the total estimated population of the district prior to the large outflow of refugees from the area.**

Another document indicated that the party had called for a big step up in recruitment in the district by the end of the year which would, if achieved, have at least doubled party membership and more than doubled Youth Group membership. Later documents during the year, however, indicated a preoccupation with "enemy" military activities in the district and suggested that development of the party was not meeting requirements.

V. The Communist Propaganda Apparatus and Its Influence

The Communists consider their propaganda operation an extremely important part of the insurgency. They attempt to ensure that it is continuous, ubiquitous, and pervasive. It is the doctrine of the insurgency that every revolutionary, no matter what his job, is also a propaganda agent. According to the captured documents, Communist propaganda seeks to "motivate" all segments of the populace to engage in the "struggle" against the government and eventually to "rise up in a general revolution. It also seeks to widen the

*They were composed of:

596 party members (apparently including 136 cadre and men organic to the district party headquarters)	
447 Party Youth Group members	
4,033 Liberation Farmers Association members	
6,143 Liberation Youths	
<u>10,869</u> Liberation Women	
22,088	TOTAL

**The NFLSV members amounted to about 18-20% of the population estimated to be over 16 in the Province. Military units under the district committee included a regular unit of 208 men, 12 village guerrilla platoons totalling 338 members, and an additional unspecified number of smaller hamlet guerrilla units--apparently in at least 68 hamlets. Many of those in the military units were probably also members of the party, the Youth Group, or the Liberation Association.

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"contradictions between various groups and the Saigon regime," to further "proselyting among the enemy's troops and officials," and to eliminate or reduce the effectiveness of the US presence by creating hatred for the Americans.

A. Propaganda Apparatus

The importance the Communists attach to their propaganda effort can be seen in the elaborate apparatus set up in the South to guide and control it. Beginning at the top with COSVN, the party structure provides for a special propaganda section within its committee structure at each echelon. These sections coordinate, plan, and produce propaganda indoctrination material as well as the curricula for the schools in Viet Cong - controlled areas.*

The propaganda disseminated by radio and through periodicals serves largely to underpin and to provide the general themes for "face-to-face" dissemination of propaganda. The documents suggest that when new policies or tactics are adopted, a "face-to-face" propaganda campaign to explain and justify them is mounted on a highly systematic basis. One directive outlining such a campaign in a district of Bien Hoa Province, for example, scheduled precisely the manner in which a new agricultural policy was to be read and explained to farmers in every hamlet. In addition to the propaganda work of local cadres, roving propaganda teams are assigned and dispatched by higher echelons as part of the campaign to "destroy" government control and presence in a hamlet or village. There are indications that local party cadres are given some latitude

*The Communists' "Liberation Radio" produces broadcasts of news, instruction, and entertainment from several mobile sites and from the COSVN base area. There is not enough information to tell the size of the Communist radio audience, but the majority of the residents in Communist-controlled areas probably listen at one time or another.

Under the banner of the Front, the Communists also publish a number of "revolutionary" newspapers; they claim 40 in the "liberated" areas--as well as periodicals and pamphlets for special audiences such as youth and women. Some are prepared clandestinely and are disseminated covertly in government-controlled areas. While much of the material is produced within South Vietnam, a lot of it comes from bloc sources.

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in adjusting the propaganda line to take advantage of local conditions and to exploit new developments. The Communists often attempt to follow up on their propaganda by promoting "political struggle" demonstrations in the towns and villages, or by fostering the presentation of petitions or letters of grievance to government authorities.*

B. Effectiveness of the Propaganda

The US military buildup and the increased pace of military action have created significant problems for the Communists, partly because the prospects for early victory could hardly be proclaimed as convincingly following the buildup as in 1964 and early 1965.

The indoctrination line being passed down to the cadres, and thus to the people, shifted after mid-1965 from emphasis on the prospect of early victory to emphasis on the inevitability of victory. Documents suggest this line may not be going over well in those areas most affected by the war.

In their effort to ensure adequate material and manpower support for their armed forces, the Communists have found it necessary to rely increasingly on coercion rather than persuasion even in areas long under their control and to backtrack also on certain propaganda lines regarding social and economic goals. For example, in mid-1965 they found it necessary to dampen down the propaganda directed against the wealthier farmers and landlords since the production of these people and their lands had become so essential to the Communist war effort.

Assessing the effectiveness and appeal of the propaganda lines is difficult, if for no other reason than that it is often impossible to distinguish reaction to propaganda

*Directives in 1965 called for the organization in villages and hamlets, particularly those close to government-controlled areas, of "permanent political struggle groups" --with responsible party cadres designated as leaders. The aim, apparently, was to have on tap crowds that could mount demonstrations on short notice. Reports from lower echelons suggest, however, rather spotty success in the organization of these groups.

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from reaction to other important influences of the war. It is probable that even the Communists are not certain of the real impact of their propaganda. The documents appear to reflect some dissatisfaction at the top, particularly with respect to the impact of propaganda on the population of areas not under firm Communist control. Assessments by lower echelons are sometimes equivocal, reporting favorable sentiments among the people but implying that these sentiments are not deep and that "armed propaganda" or coercion by force is essential in obtaining their cooperation.

The anti-American line of the Communists undoubtedly has had an impact. The Communists attempt to exploit parochial and nationalist sentiments, and in particular to appeal to those affected personally by the foreign military presence. They have moved peasants to demonstrate against bombings or against displacement from their homes. Through the infiltration of agitators in the northern cities this spring, they succeeded somewhat in adding to the anti-American cast of the "struggle movement" propaganda. However, there is no indication that the Communists have generally managed to evoke the "hatred" of Americans which they have attempted. A refrain seen in Communist documents, in reports to higher authority from lower echelons, is that dislike and hatred and fear of Americans is growing; at the same time, however, concern is expressed that a "fierce" anti-American spirit and an anti-American movement are slow in coming.

It is indisputable that the Communists have appealed successfully to large numbers of individuals and have obtained willing adherents to their cause; moreover, they have succeeded in engaging the aspirations of segments of particular groups--for example, of numbers of montagnards with promises of autonomy. But the lines on broad issues do not appear to have captured the enthusiastic support of any sizable section of the populace outside Communist-held areas.

The net impression of the available evidence is that Communist propaganda has served more effectively as a recruiting device and to neutralize or to assist in controlling broad elements of the populace than as a medium for awakening a sustained political movement.

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VI. The Overall Effectiveness of the Political Subversive Apparatus

A. With the Rural Vietnamese

The net impression conveyed by the evidence described in previous sections on Communist political activity throughout the rural areas is that the Communists have achieved the willing cooperation and participation of considerable elements of the populace in the "liberated" areas, but they have not been able to get the willing participation of the large, unaffiliated, locally-oriented mass of the peasantry. The Communists must rely for continuing support even within their controlled areas, on a blend of indoctrination, suasion, agitation, and coercion. In the rural areas they do not now hold, but must, if they are to achieve their ultimate hopes--those surrounding Saigon, for example--the Communists have recruited numbers of adherents. Their documents indicate, however, that they find it necessary to rely primarily on "armed propaganda" and guerilla warfare to achieve significant influence.

Communist reports indicate an increasing concern over inability to counter effectively the impact of large-scale allied military operations on the populace. In areas where such operations have been mounted, there appears to be increasing popular reluctance to cooperate with, contribute to, or shelter the insurgent armed forces. The documents speak of growing difficulties in recruiting the types of people needed for military and labor-support units, particularly those units which leave their native villages or districts. Coercion must increasingly be applied where propaganda suasion fails.

Lower echelons report that even some insurgent political cadres are fleeing to safe places and staying "politically inactive." Increasing concern is also registered in the documents over the flight of refugees to government-controlled areas, over the government pacification programs, and over government counter-propaganda. Lower echelons report that political organization and proselyting are slow.

It is impossible as yet to judge the extent to which these difficulties are hurting the Communist war effort, or to tell whether they will grow to the point where

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they will largely block further Communist progress in subverting the rural populace through political action. It seems clear, however, that Communist progress through political action in the rural areas since early 1965 has slowed significantly, at least in these areas affected by allied military operations. (Annex III contains additional discussion of the status of the rural populace under Viet Cong control.)

It is possible to make a rough estimate--on the basis of a data base which is admittedly incomplete--of the total percentage of the populace in South Vietnam which is under the direct control of the Vietnamese Communists. It would appear that at least 3.5 million persons, or about 21 percent of the total population of 16 million (the latest US Government estimate of the total population of South Vietnam), fall into this category.*

Four million other people reside in areas where it is impossible to tell the exact degree of control or influence exercised by either the Viet Cong or the Saigon Government. This group, approximately 25 percent of the population, should probably be regarded as an essentially uncommitted group in that it does not give allegiance by choice either to the government in Saigon or to the Viet Cong. The balance of the population, some 8.6 million, are considered firmly under government control.** This government-controlled segment of the population, which includes 3.2 million urban dwellers and one million refugees, comprises some 54 percent of the total.

Current reporting indicates that about 75 percent of South Vietnam's 66,000 square miles of territory is not

*For the purpose here, an area and its inhabitants are considered to be under the direct control of the Communists wherever the Communists are in a position of such unchallenged domination that they have been able to establish at least a semi-overt insurgent governmental apparatus.

**They are, for example, given relatively effective protection by government forces and are relatively responsive to the day to day dictates of government officers who reside and move freely throughout these areas.

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effectively or lastingly controlled by either the Communists or the government. Much of this area is wasteland, uninhabited or sparsely settled. The Communists are able to operate at will throughout the area, but probably do not try to exercise exclusive domination except where they have base areas.

The 54 percent of the population which the Saigon government controls probably occupies not more than 12 to 15 percent of the total land area of the country. The portion of the population under direct Viet Cong control is situated on what is probably only about 7 to 10 percent of the total land area. On a day-to-day basis, then, the major populated areas of contention between the allies and the Communists constitute only about one-quarter of the land area of South Vietnam. (See figure III-2)

B. In the Cities: Saigon in Particular

The Communists realize that it is in the cities that the greatest gains need be made if the armed forces and the government are to be riddled from within. Of the cities, Saigon is by far the most important. Analysis of captured documents and other intelligence information relating to Saigon suggests that the Communists may feel that they have succeeded in winning the sympathies of a not inconsiderable segment of the city dwellers. The information suggests further, however, that the Communists do not consider this sympathy--or their influence in the cities generally--as sufficient to ensure effective support for any major overt action on their part. It is certainly clear that they do not believe they have sufficient covert assets within Saigon.

The Communists appear to see their efforts in the cities as proceeding along two mutually supporting paths--one of organization and preparation for the day when the conditions they seek will arise, and one of terrorism and agitation to help create those conditions. In September 1965, the party's Current Affairs Committee for the capital zone claimed that terrorist attacks had "aroused enthusiasm among the people" and had frightened government personnel. The result according to the document, was that the "people, especially the laborers, clearly sympathize with the Revolution" and "enthusiastically support and cover our activities...". They will be with us, the document claimed, when the general uprising occurs.

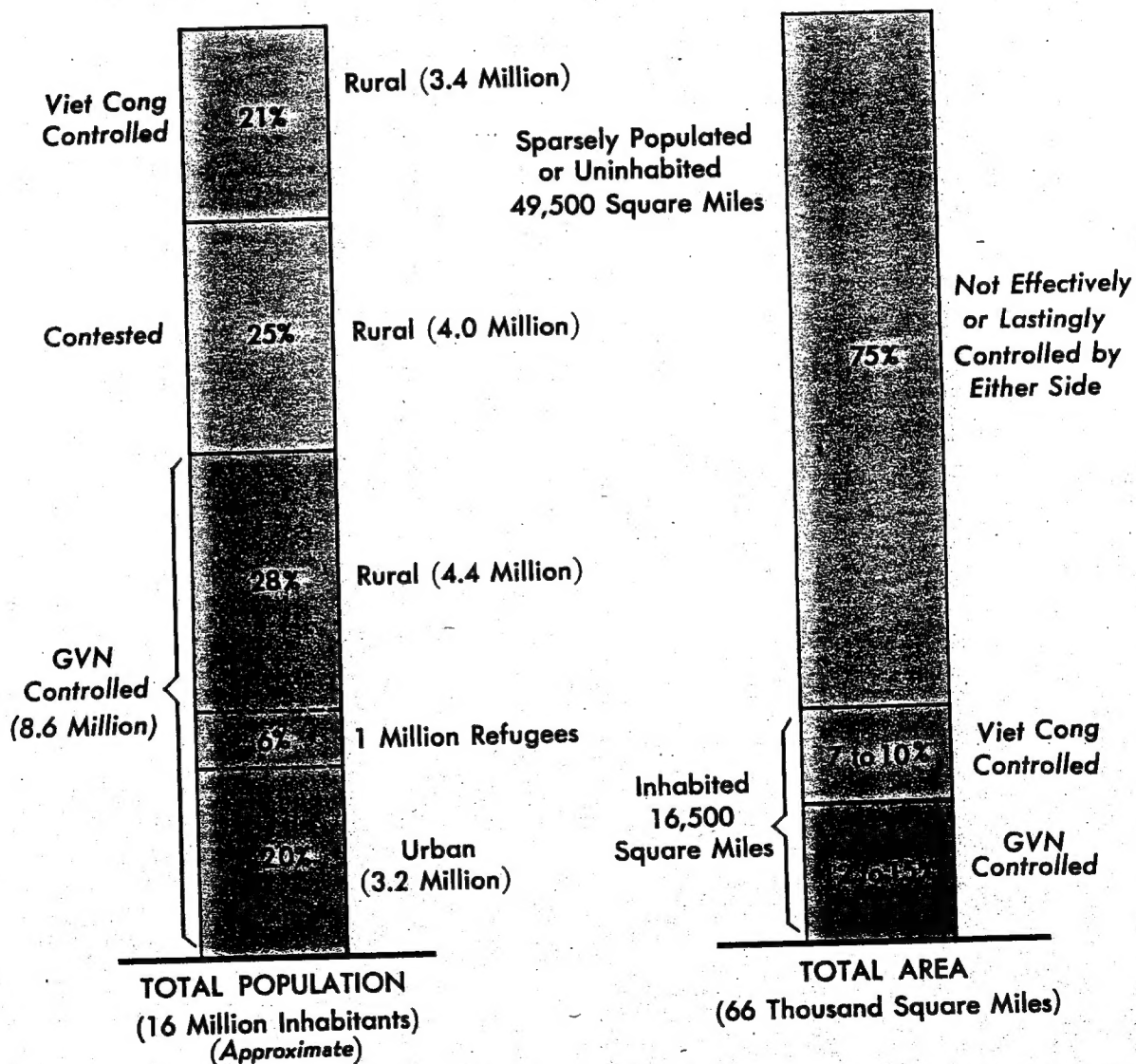
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Figure III-2

SOUTH VIETNAM POPULATION AND AREA CONTROL



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Nevertheless, the document admitted that the Communists were not ready in September 1965 for any major action in Saigon. It recommended that we "draft plans" for seizing control of slums in the capital and for promoting "our political movement through military activities."*

The captured documents also register suspicion of certain groups in the cities, indicating they should be watched, exploited if possible, but not viewed as major sources of support. Such groups include the Buddhists, other political parties--"both the progressive ones and the counterrevolutionary ones"--and the "bourgeois landlords, both progressive and revolutionary."**

On balance, the evidence so far developed indicates that the Buddhist-backed dissidence and the "confrontations" in the cities this spring were not created or controlled by the Communists, but that the Communists did move to exploit them and to manipulate them as much as they could through infiltration. There is evidence, for example, that the leadership of the "struggle" movement in the cities was infiltrated by Communists. There was apparently no overt Communist military move in direct support of the dissidents, however. The Communists probably decided that the time for a major military move was not right, since the over-all conditions were not yet favorable and their own influence and support in the cities was too weak.

*A subsequent document, a notebook recording what appeared to constitute the views of the party leaders for the Saigon area at the end of 1965, claimed further progress in gaining popular sympathy, but again admitted weakness in capability. It claimed that the presence of US troops had helped block the disruption of the "antirevolutionary" forces in Saigon, but asserted that agents were still limited, and that their low efficiency was leading to detection and arrest.

**Another directive of the Saigon area's Current Affairs Committee spoke critically of the "intellectual bourgeoisie." It noted that "a progressive faction has been joining the Front and is going to be more inclined toward the Revolution," but "the majority is nonaligned and adopts the attitude of wait-and-see," while "a small faction becomes more and more overtly reactionary by acting as imperialists' lackeys...."

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